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FRONT COVER An early buccanneer on Hispaniola, shown with his hunting dog and musket. These boucanniers were skilled marksmen, and by the mid-17th century had turned from hunting to piracy. (The Hensley Collection, Ashville, North Carolina)

BACK COVER Map of the Spanish Main, c.1670. The strategic location of Jamaica in the centre of the Caribbean basin allowed the buccaneers to threaten all parts of the Spanish overseas empire, whose principal ports are shown here. (The Hensley Collection, Ashville, North Carolina)
INTRODUCTION

BEFORE THE ERA known as the ‘Golden Age of Piracy’ in the early-18th century, the waters of the Caribbean played host to a far more ambitious collection of pirates. The Spanish regarded the area as their own exclusive preserve, but other European settlers gained footholds in the region known as the ‘Spanish Main’. From the 1630s, many of these French, English and Dutch ‘interlopers’ took to piracy, attacking Spanish passing shipping using small boats. In 1655 the English captured the island of Jamaica, providing a safe harbour for these buccaneers. The scale of the attacks intensified to encompass raids on small Spanish settlements, until by the late 1660s full-blown amphibious operations were being launched against Spanish strongholds in the New World. Buccaneer commanders such as Henry Morgan plundered their way through the Spanish Main, and by the time the buccaneering era drew to a close in 1697, the Spanish American colonies had been devastated, and Spain reduced to the status of a near-penniless minor power.

Sources covering the buccaneering era are sparse, although these can be combined with other documentary evidence to fill the gaps in the story. Several buccaneers and their contemporaries left chronicles of their activities, the most extensive being the work by Dutchman Alexandre Exquemelin (also written Esquemeling) first published in Amsterdam in 1678, and entitled De Americaensche Zee-Rovers. An English translation, The Buccaneers of America, was published in 1684. This remarkable and vivid account was written by a man who joined the French buccaneers on Tortuga in 1666. A surgeon, he lived among them for 12 years, and the work became a 17th-century best-seller. It is still in print today.

Other accounts by English and French buccaneers and their Spanish victims paint an equally vivid picture, and provide useful information concerning both the driving forces behind buccaneering and the world in which they operated. Some even include gazetteers of the ports of the Spanish Main, with instructions on how best to attack them. A number of modern historians have examined the period in some detail and the work of Spanish scholars has
proved particularly valuable. Other sources include the *Calendar of State Papers (Colonial Series)* and other similar collections of printed historical documents are readily available either in the Public Record Office in London, the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, the Library of Congress in Washington DC or the library of the Mariners' Museum in Virginia.

**THE BUCCANEERS AND THEIR VICTIMS**

**The Spanish Main during the Buccaneer era**

In 1650, the Spanish had just emerged from the traumatic Thirty Years War (1618-48), with the country impoverished and in desperate need of a period of peace. Peace was denied them, however, as war with the French dragged on without intermission until 1659, while Oliver Cromwell turned on Spain in 1654, launching a conflict which would continue intermittently until 1670. Spanish efforts in defending the Catholic faith in Europe drained Spain's coffers, and there was little or nothing left to spend on the defence of her ports in the Spanish Main. Therefore, when the buccaneering era began, Spanish overseas possessions were at their most vulnerable.

During the decade following Christopher Columbus's first voyage (1492), Spain established a firm control over the islands of Cuba and Hispaniola, creating a base for further exploration, settlement and conquest. By 1540 her overseas territories included most of the Caribbean basin and Peru. Under the terms of the Treaty of Tordesillas (1497) arranged by the Papacy, a north-south line was drawn in the Atlantic Ocean. Portugal was granted a monopoly of trade and discovery to the east of the line, giving her control of the trade route to the east around Africa. Spain was awarded everything to the west, which included North and South America except Brazil, which lay in the Portuguese sector. For the next century and a half, the Spanish would fight an increasingly futile battle to maintain this monopoly, particularly in the Caribbean basin which contained most of Spain's colonial settlements. During the 16th century, interlopers from other European nations raided the region, which by that stage had become known as the 'Spanish Main'. Francis Drake was one of the most notorious, and the Spanish regarded him as a pirate. Justice was harsh in this undeclared war on the Spanish monopoly; an encroaching French settlement in Florida was brutally destroyed in 1565, and its settlers massacred. The rallying cry for both the Spanish and other European adventurers was 'no peace beyond the line'.

By 1655, the Spanish monopoly had been broken. French, Dutch and English settlers had established colonies in many of the islands of the
Lesser Antilles, the most prominent being the English colony on Barbados and the French ones on Guadeloupe and Martinique. Even more important was the English conquest of Jamaica in 1655, which gave them a base in the very heart of the Spanish Main. French settlers were also established on the western coast of the Spanish island of Hispaniola, and within a decade this would develop into the French colony of Saint Domingue. Both this colony and Jamaica would provide the buccaneers with secure bases, and supportive colonial administrations. These encroachments, combined with the Spanish lack of preparedness in the Americas for what amounted to a full-scale war, created ideal circumstances for the buccaneers who saw the Spanish empire as a poorly defended treasure house.

Originally, the 'Spanish Main' was a term used to refer to the northern coast of South America, the 'mainland' or Terra Firma. By the mid-17th century its scope had widened to include the entire Caribbean basin and by 1650 the region was divided into a number of principalities, each commanded by a viceroy or governor. New Spain encompassed Mexico and parts of Central America, with its capital in Mexico City. Lesser governors controlled Panama and Honduras, but were answerable to the viceroy in Mexico. The viceroy of New Granada included what is now Venezuela and Colombia, with a capital at Cartagena. Further to the south, the viceroy of Peru encompassed what was once the Incan empire, the most lucrative part of the Spanish dominions in the Americas. Finally, the islands of the Greater Antilles including Cuba, Hispaniola and Puerto Rico all retained their own governors, although the governor of Cuba, based in Havana, was the most senior.

For the Spanish, one of the most important functions of the Spanish empire was to ensure that a continuous flow of precious metals was produced in her American mines and was safely shipped to Spain. Although legend has surrounded this whole area, 90 per cent of the precious metals shipped to Spain were silver and gold, with the greatest
silver mines being in Peru. Silver was also mined in Mexico, while gold and emerald mines were found in Colombia.

The system of shipment centred around a system of secure ports and powerful treasure fleets. First, silver was shipped up the South American coast to Panama, where it was transported onto mules and taken across the isthmus to Porto Bello. Similar shipments were gathered at the ports of Cartagena in Venezuela and Vera Cruz in Mexico. Every year a fleet left Seville in Spain, bound for the New World. It carried settlers, luxury items, weapons and tools, and once it reached the Spanish Main it split into smaller squadrons. One portion sailed to Porto Bello to collect the year’s silver production from Peru, then sailed on to Cartagena. Another squadron made for Vera Cruz, while other ships visited the smaller Spanish ports in the region. All the ships then gathered in the Cuban port of Havana in order that they could sail home in convoy. The same system was used throughout the 17th century, and it proved remarkably successful. Although one fleet was wrecked off the Florida Keys in 1622, and another was captured by the Dutch in 1628, the ships almost always reached Spain safely. For most of the 17th century, the fleets seemed too powerful to attack, and the buccaneers left them well alone.

The weak point of the fleet system lay in the ports. While Cartagena and Havana were considered too strong for the buccaneers to attack, others remained poorly defended. Porto Bello, Panama and Vera Cruz were all vital parts of the Spanish treasure-gathering operation, but they all succumbed to buccaneer attacks. Although both Vera Cruz and Panama boasted impressive fortifications, they were poorly maintained, and supplies of both men and matériel were minimal as Spain required all her resources to fight her enemies in Europe. While powerful colonial governors ensured that their own capitals were well defended, the smaller ports of the Spanish Main had to make do as best they could. Local militias were raised, although for much of the period they lacked the equipment and training to defend their towns against buccaneer attacks.
It was only in the 1670s that the Spanish crown diverted resources to improve the region’s defence. Regular Spanish troops were sent to the Americas, and money was spent on the training and re-equipping of the militias. Fortifications which had been easily overcome by the buccaneers were strengthened, and yet more money was spent on local naval patrols by the Armada de Barlovento, tasked with protecting Spanish shipping within the Caribbean basin. Although the Spanish Main was still subjected to attacks from French buccaneers and others, the Spanish were at least capable of putting up a more spirited defence. Spanish attacks on Saint Domingue during the 1690s also showed that they had learned from their enemies, and were capable of employing the aggressive defensive strategy which had so successfully been used against them 30 years before.

The Rise of the Buccaneers

While the first Spanish settlements in the New World were established in the Antilles, by the 17th century the emphasis had changed to the development of the more lucrative territories of the mainland of Central and South America. While Spain still maintained colonies in the Greater Antilles, most of the islands in the chain comprising the Lesser Antilles remained uninhabited by Europeans. Consequently ‘interlopers’ or non-Spanish settlers moved in and established settlements, where tobacco crops were grown for illegal sale to Spanish colonial towns. The Spanish authorities undertook several punitive expeditions to drive out these settlers, particularly when there was evidence that they provided bases for English and Dutch ‘sea-dogs’ to raid Spanish ports.

One of the most devastating of these expeditions was conducted in 1629, when a Spanish force attacked the colonies on Nevis and St Kitts and deported its settlers, but the Spanish action proved to be too late, too late. More settlers reoccupied the islands and even settled on the large Spanish island of Hispaniola. While the Spanish presence on the island was restricted to colonies concentrated on its southern side, the hinterland was unoccupied. This soon provided a haven for English, Dutch and predominantly French settlers, who regarded the very vastness of the island as a safe haven. The pattern was repeated on several of the smaller islands of the Antilles, where cattle and pigs roamed wild, and could be hunted down for food and as a source of income. These hunters cured the meat they caught by smoking it in a fire which used a smoking platform known as a *boucan*, a word derived from a native Arawak source. The hunters became known as *boucaniers*, which evolved into ‘buccaneer’. 
The largest concentration of buccaneers was in the western portion of Hispaniola, far from the centres of Spanish authority. These men established coastal trading settlements and dealt with smugglers and other passing ships, exchanging smoked meat for weapons, powder, shot or other essentials, including wine. They were constantly under threat of attack by the Spanish, either in the form of coastal patrols or during one of the many Spanish raids into the hinterland. Many of the men had been dispossessed, evicted from their settlements by the Spanish and they maintained a strong enmity for their old enemy. This was fuelled by religious differences, as the majority of these early buccaneers were Protestants, and the Spanish viewed them as heretics. A near-contemporary described the life of the early buccaneers: 'In general they were without habitation or fixed abode, but rendezvoused where the animals were to be found.' When a ship appeared they would take their meat to the shore and establish a temporary market place. Theirs was an almost exclusively male frontier society, rough men living in primitive conditions.

As a refuge from frequent Spanish sweeps through Hispaniola, the buccaneers established themselves on the island of Tortuga, off the north-west coast. By the late 1620s or early 1630s this had evolved into a permanent base, and the buccaneers had discovered another even more lucrative source of income.

The body of water which lay between the westernmost part of Hispaniola and the eastern part of Cuba was known as the Windward Passage. During the early-17th century it was a major coastal shipping lane, linking the ports of northern Cuba and the colony of St Augustine in Florida with the ports of the Caribbean. It was also used by the smaller elements of the treasure fleets heading for their rendezvous in Havana, and by the early 1630s it had become a haven for buccaneers. Using harbours such as Cayenne on Tortuga, buccaneers preyed on the
Spanish ships using small canoes (*piraguas*) or even light pinnaces purchased from smugglers and traders. An early French exponent of this was Pierre le Grande, who, with 28 men and a small pinnace, captured a small Spanish galleon. The tactics used by these early buccaneers are discussed later, but stealth and surprise were key elements in buccaneer attacks.

Both the start of attacks on Spanish shipping and the establishment of a base on Tortuga marked a transition for the buccaneers. While before they were predominantly hunters, from the 1630s they began to evolve into pirates, although by restricting their attacks to Spanish shipping they posed no threat to their native countries. Although buccaneers continued to hunt, as they did on islands throughout the Antilles, the association of the name 'buccaneer' developed, until by the 1650s it was exclusively used to refer to maritime raiders. As their numbers grew and they acquired larger and more powerful ships, buccaneering settlements attracted recruits: runaway indentured servants or slaves, deserting seamen or simple adventurers. These bands began to call themselves the 'Brethren of the Coast', a romantic title for a violent collection of men.

For much of the 17th century, France, England and Holland were at war with Spain, and the establishment of colonial administrations in several of the islands of the Lesser Antilles provided an opportunity for the buccaneers to give their piratical activities a veneer of legitimacy. Colonial governors were authorised to issue 'Letters of Marque' (also known as 'Letters of Reprisal') during time of war, granting the recipient the status of a privateer. While a pirate existed beyond the law, privateers operated on behalf of a particular nationality. For example if France was at war with Spain, letters of marque could be issued to ship captains, and they would then seek out and attack Spanish shipping. In return for a share of the profits from the prizes captured and a secure port, the sponsoring government created a tool with which to disrupt enemy

*View of Havana harbour in the late-17th century. The strongest port in the Spanish Main, it proved too powerful for the buccaneers to attack. On the left is the Morro castle which dominated the harbour entrance. (Museum of Arts and Sciences, Daytona Beach, Florida)*
trade. In the Caribbean, where non-Spanish warships were rarely available, privateering became a vital aspect of warfare. From the 1640s, buccaneering crews were granted French or Dutch letters of marque by the governors of St Martin (for Holland) and St Christopher/St Kitts (for France). This employment of buccaneers as auxiliaries became part of national policy during the decades following 1650.

In 1655 an English expedition captured the island of Jamaica from the Spanish. Almost immediately the newly appointed English governor looked to the buccaneers for defence. While most of the French buccaneering groups remained concentrated on Tortuga or the western portion of Hispaniola (Saint Domingue), most of the English buccaneers moved to Jamaica. Although many of the Dutch, English and French colonies on the Lesser Antilles harboured buccaneering crews, by 1660 the buccaneers were concentrated in two centres, and were divided along national lines. By 1660 the buccaneers were firmly established as a force in the Caribbean, and the heyday of the buccaneering era had begun.

The Brethren of the Coast
Between 1660 and 1690, long after the buccaneers had become maritime raiders, many of the characteristics of their community could be traced back to their roots as hunters. While historians are divided over the origin of the phrase ‘Brethren of the Coast’ and some attribute it to an appellation created after the buccaneering era, it serves to indicate the unique sense of ‘brotherhood’ which dominated the society which the buccaneers created for themselves. French writers referred to the ‘frères de la côte’ or even the ‘people of the coast’ when speaking of the inhabitants of Saint Domingue, whether buccaneers or colonists. Others suggest that the term was used as early as the mid-17th century, although the phrase was never used by the contemporary writer Exquemelin. Its inclusion here is principally to imply the social system under which the buccaneers operated.

Composition of Buccaneer Bands
The historian David Cordingly described buccaneers as ‘several generations of fortune hunters who roamed the Caribbean looking for plunder. They included soldiers and seamen, deserters and runaway slaves, cut-throats and criminals, religious refugees, and a considerable number of out-and-out pirates’. This amply sums up the polyglot nature of buccaneer crews, who were often men who grouped themselves together for one particular expedition, and returned to the melting pot of their home port when the expedition returned. The links established between the boucanniers of the early-17th century and smugglers or coastal traders were strong enough to force the huntsmen to turn their
backs on the land. Both groups were interlopers in the Spanish Main whose survival was dependent on keeping away from Spanish authority. These early colonial mariners established trading links between the 'interloping' colonies, and sold the cash crops they produced to the remoter fringes of the Spanish overseas empire. The buccaneers who first took to attacking passing Spanish ships were therefore a combination of hunters (who, incidentally, would have been skilled marksmen) and mariners who knew the local waters and were skilled at avoiding detection.

The influx of refugees to these buccaneering communities altered this balance. Every time the Spanish attacked a colony of 'interlopers' in the Lesser Antilles, many of the colonists evaded capture until the Spanish went away. These dispossessed farmers and settlers gravitated towards the buccaneering communities who provided a safe haven, however transitory. The same maritime traders who served the buccaneers provided the conduit along which these people reached the buccaneering settlements. French, Dutch and English colonies continued to develop in the Antilles as more settlers replaced those driven out by the Spanish. This trend intensified during the 1630s as Spanish attacks became increasingly infrequent because of the country’s involvement in the Thirty Years War. The cash crops produced in the island colonies were labour-intensive, and indentured servants were increasingly used to provide a cheap source of labour. Although they obtained their freedom after a tenure of several years, many ran away, and once more the buccaneering communities provided a safe haven. The same protection was sometimes offered to runaway slaves who were increasingly being introduced to the region to work on sugar plantations, although many buccaneers simply sold these unfortunate people back into slavery.

Following the establishment of colonial authority in Jamaica and Saint Domingue, two fresh but vital groups were added to the pool from which buccaneering crews were composed. When the
Commonwealth was replaced by the Restoration government in England in 1660, the soldiers who garrisoned Jamaica were paid off. For the buccaneers based in Port Royal this created a pool of hundreds of skilled soldiers who were ideally suited to the techniques of amphibious raids instituted by men such as the naval captain Christopher Myngs. Similarly, following the end of the Thirty Years War in 1648, ex-soldiers sailed to the Caribbean in search of employment, and many naturally gravitated towards the buccaneers. From the 1660s dozens of sea captains and crews arrived in the Caribbean from Europe, drawn by the profusion of letters of marque and the opportunities for plunder. Buccaneer crews were therefore drawn from various sources, and were often composed of men of various nationalities, despite the tendency of the French and English to operate independently. What united them were the twin driving forces of a desire for plunder and a hatred of the Spanish.

**Buccaneer Dress**

A number of contemporary descriptions survive which refer to the dress of the early *boucanniers* of Hispaniola and other Caribbean islands. The appearance of these hunters is reconstructed in Plate A, although no visual image can portray the smell which must have accompanied these men. Stalking prey and dismembering the carcass was followed by days of smoking the meat this provided, and according to the French clergyman, the Abbé Jean Baptiste Du Tetre, they often slept beside their smoking fires in order to keep the mosquitoes at bay. In an era when
personal hygiene was rudimentary at best, the *boucanniers* were clearly exceptionally smelly. Du Tetre remarked, 'You would say that these are the butcher's vilest servants who have been eight days in the slaughterhouse without washing themselves.'

By the time the hunters had become seagoing raiders in the middle of the 17th century, their appearance would have changed. Home-made hunting shirts and breeches were replaced by clothes typical of seamen of the period, and except for a surfeit of weapons, the appearance of a buccaneer would be the same as that of the smugglers and coastal traders who frequented the region. Contemporary depictions in works such as sketches by the two Van de Veldes and others show how European seamen dressed. The appearance of European seamen in the Caribbean was similar, although allowances were made towards the climate, with light cotton shirts and breeches replacing the heavier materials worn elsewhere. Most commonly, a seaman wore loose woollen knee-length breeches, a coarse linen shirt and a neckerchief or scarf tied around the neck. Variations included seaman’s skirts or wide-bottomed cotton trousers, while a sleeved vest or more commonly a short sailor’s jacket would be worn over the shirt. The jackets were woollen or often made from canvas, and contemporary accounts mention that they were soaked in a light solution of pitch or wax in order to make them waterproof. Headgear was almost always worn as protection from the sun, usually in the form of a scarf, a felt slouch hat, a knitted woollen cap or even a straw hat. Footwear was rarely worn at sea.

By the 1660s, buccaneers were more amphibious raiders than privateersmen, and their dress changed accordingly. Many of the discharged soldiers who accompanied Christopher Myngs on his raid on Santiago in 1662 wore their old military uniforms, depicted in Plates B and C. This introduced a practical form of military dress, and by the late 1660s, buccaneers bore more of a similarity to contemporary soldiers than sailors. Coats cut in a military style became popular attire, and with variations based on a woollen or canvas coat or vest which extended to the calf. The cut changed over the years in line with contemporary military fashion, and this change is reflected in the colour plates. Footwear and even
stockings are depicted, as are leather sandals and boots. Following a successful raid, the buccaneers would take clothing as part of their plunder, which further added to their eclectic appearance. Above all, they carried weaponry and the accoutrements of war, and regardless of any other aspect of their appearance, this was the first thing which observers noticed about them. Weaponry will be discussed later in the volume.

**Organisation and Allegiance**

Although characterised as a lawless group, buccaneers developed highly structured codes of conduct, based on a system which dated back to the days of the early *boucannier* hunters. From their earliest days, buccaneers operated in pairs, living and fighting together. The system developed from the need to protect one another while hunting or combat. According to contemporaries, the buccaneers took this pairing even further. If one died, the other would inherit his possessions, and in the buccaneer ports where men outnumbered women, it was even reported that they shared wives or mistresses. This ‘buddy system’ appears to have died out by the mid 1670s, as there is no mention of its survival after this time. Beyond this, buccaneer organisation appears to have been very fluid, but based on a particularly strong sense of egality and pre-arranged terms and conditions.

Buccaneer crews were gathered by individual ship captains, and prominent buccaneers with their own ships had no trouble recruiting suitable crews in the harbour taverns of Jamaica and Tortuga. Exquemelin provides a description of the procedure. After calling a gathering of all those willing to participate, the captain would draw up a written agreement which specified aspects of the operation. This included the division of plunder, compensation for any participant who suffered injury, set wages for non-combatants such as a ship’s surgeon or

Henry Morgan recruiting for a raid. Drawing by Howard Pyle, for Harper’s Weekly, 1885. The atmospheric work of artists such as Pyle helped to ensure that an ill-deserved romanticism surrounded the 17th-century buccaneers. (The Hensley Collection, Asheville, North Carolina)
a maritime artisan and included a non-concealment clause, preventing any one seaman from creating his own cache of plunder. All who agreed would sign the document or make their mark, and the crew would join the ship and prepare for sea. Unlucky or unpopular buccaneer captains such as Bartolomeo el Portugues or Rok Brasiliano were reduced to signing on a mere handful of desperate men, as all others avoided contracting with them. Crews could vary from a mere two dozen for a pinnace, to almost 200 for a large three-masted flagship. While the captain provided the ship, provisions, artillery and powder it was up to each individual buccaneer to provide his own personal weaponry, such as a musket, bandolier, sword, dagger and pistol.

Large raids were organised by buccaneer commanders such as Henry Morgan who sent word that they were organising an attack. Individual captains would be called to a meet at a pre-arranged rendezvous, such as the Isle-à-Vache off the southwestern coast of Saint Domingue, or around the islands off the south-western corner of Cuba. Once a fleet had gathered, the individual captains would be called to a meeting, and another contract would be drawn up governing the entire expedition. Sub-contracts were possible, involving groups of ships, and this was the case during the Anglo-French raid on Cuba in 1668. The target of the raid would be decided upon and all captains present would vote on the choice. In theory, this democratic process was in stark contrast to contemporary military or naval practice, although naval commanders such as Christopher Myngs flourished by combining legitimate national forces with those of the buccaneers. In such cases, Myngs represented the navy, and ensured they would share the plunder. A prime example of what happened when this system broke down was after the attack on Cartagena in 1697. As part of the joint naval and buccaneer expedition, the French buccaneers who participated expected a proportionate share of the booty. Instead, the naval idea of shares ‘man-for-man’ was based on a naval system where ratings gained a fraction of the sum reserved for officers. The buccaneers felt swindled and returned to Cartagena, plundering what they felt was their fair share of whatever was left to take.

National allegiance was an increasingly important factor to the buccaneers. By obtaining a letter of marque, buccaneer captains were effectively taking sides on behalf of their sponsor’s nationality. While everyone was fighting the Spanish, this was never a problem. Following the Treaty of Madrid in 1670 when Spain and England made peace, the English demanded that buccaneers stop their raiding. Henry Morgan’s men attacked Panama flying the English St George’s cross alongside
individual (and unrecorded) flags of green and red, even though the two countries were not at war. It gave his expedition the appearance of legitimacy, although he still faced charges of piracy on his return to Jamaica. Initially, many English buccaneers obtained French letters of marque, but increasingly France, Holland and England found themselves at war with each other. While buccaneers always fought under their national flags, increasingly they did so against fellow buccaneers.

**THE BUCCANEERING ART OF WAR**

The buccaneering period introduced a new dimension to warfare in the Americas. In the early-17th century attacks on the Spanish empire in the New World had been confined to small-scale raids, but from the 1660s, large expeditions were launched into Spanish territory. The forces gathered together by the buccaneer commanders represented the largest European military gatherings seen in America. Although many of the engagements were small by European standards, the scale of warfare would not be repeated until the American Revolution a century later. The buccaneers also evolved their own tactics based on the available weapons and training, and their activities constitute a fascinating and largely unknown chapter in American military history.
**Buccaneer Weapons**

For much of the buccaneer period, the standard firearm was the matchlock musket. As the weapon measured up to 5ft (1.5 metres) long, it was cumbersome to carry and operate, and smaller and lighter calibre muskets were sometimes used, although many buccaneers considered them less effective in battle.

Although the Spanish were one of Europe’s leading exponents of the development of flintlock ignition systems, few reached her troops in the New World. Officers and dragoons sometimes carried ‘miguelet lock’ flintlock fusils from the mid-17th century, but flintlocks were only introduced to infantry units at the end of the century. Buccaneers were unconstrained by military contractors, and equipped themselves with flintlock guns whenever they were available. Gun dealers in Port Royal performed a roaring trade in the new flintlocks, as bills of export from London gunmakers testify.

Whatever the ignition system, the loading process was the same. A charge was inserted down the barrel followed by a shot and wadding, which was rammed into place. Once the pan was primed, the weapon was ready to fire. Although most Spaniards and some musketeers still relied on bandoliers carrying ‘apostles’ of powder, the use of pre-rolled cartridges containing both powder and shot were also widely used by buccaneers. Cartridges were faster to use in action, but their preparation and use was restricted to the day of battle itself, as the charges were very susceptible to tropical humidity. Bandoliers, with waterproof and relatively airtight ‘apostles’ (individual powder containers) were simply more practical in most conditions encountered on the Spanish Main.

Pistols were occasionally carried by buccaneers and by Spanish cavalry, particularly in the later decades of the century. Although some of the earlier wheel-lock weapons were used, most were flintlock pistols. Some English examples certainly reached Port Royal’s gunshops, and like English muskets of the time, they used a ‘dog-lock’ safety latch as part of the flintlock mechanism. Spanish flintlock pistols were also widely available, often the product of Madrid gunmakers who supplied the troops of the Spanish overseas empire, and therefore by default, the buccaneers, once the weapons were captured.

Unlike firearms, which were fairly standard throughout the period, swords were a matter of personal style and taste. An examination of contemporary or near-contemporary illustrations reveals that the buccaneers carried a wide variety of edged weapons. ‘Hangers’ were a form of hunting sword adapted for military or naval use, and were the most popular form of blade, although by the end of the buccaneer period they had developed into a weapon resembling the true naval cutlass. Broad swords or other heavy blades were also popular, underlining the buccaneer preference for ‘cut’ rather than ‘thrust’ weapons.


Route taken by Captain Sharp and other English buccaneers into the Pacific, 1680-83. Although England and Spain were at peace, these raiders operated under French letters of marque to attack the coast of Peru. (Author's Collection)
Spanish officers still used the rapier, and these Toledo steel weapons were considered to be among the finest edged weapons available. As the century progressed, the rapier was replaced by the small-sword, another narrow-bladed thrusting weapon that became the standard sword of the European officer by the last two decades of the 17th century. Both of these weapons were designed for personal protection and were better suited for duels or for fencing rather than for use on the battlefield. Spanish infantry were also equipped with either hangers or, by 1690, with a simplified ‘munition-quality’ version of the small-sword. The heavier swords carried by the buccaneers gave them a distinct advantage in hand-to-hand combat.

Spanish cavalry relied on both heavy cavalry broadswords or heavy thrusting weapons, and at least in the New World rarely seem to have relied on the pistol tactics commonly practised in Europe. This stemmed from the buccaneer’s refusal to adopt the pike for defence, and the Spanish believed that a charge home against buccaneer musket formations would be more effective than skirmishing at a distance. Pistols were still widely used by Spanish troops, as were flintlock carbines, although supply was a constant problem for commanders in the Americas, so equipping a militia cavalry or dragoon unit with homogenous weaponry would have been virtually impossible.

Spanish infantry formations retained the pike throughout the period, although the ratio of pikes to muskets fell during the period, from 1 in 3 in 1650 to 1 in 5 by 1690. Despite the fact that the Spanish never needed protection from buccaneer cavalry, their infantry commanders followed Spanish peninsular practices when it came to including pikemen in foot formations. As for the buccaneers, they had no standard tactical doctrine to restrict them, and there were simply not enough Spanish cavalries to make the adoption of the pike worthwhile. By the late 1670s, Spanish infantry in Europe were being issued with plug bayonets,
designed to fit into the barrels of their muskets. It is probable that this innovation was adopted readily by buccaneers as well as by the Spaniards, so any tactical advantage they provided would be fleeting.

To sum up, while the Spanish were fairly good at equipping their troops with the best weapons available, the buccaneers were free to embrace weapons suited to their style of fighting, not ones designed for a European battlefield. This, combined with their training and better tactical prowess on the battlefield, made them difficult to beat.

**Tactics**

Following the establishment of buccaneering centres at Port Royal and Tortuga, large expeditions became possible, with buccaneer groups combining to form striking forces capable of attacking well-defended Spanish towns and cities. In both bases, but particularly in Port Royal, ex-soldiers made up a large pool of skilled recruits, and were able to train the less-experienced sailors and landsmen. The mid-17th century was a period when warfare was undergoing a transition. The Thirty Years War was particularly destructive in its devastation of the civilian communities, and rape, plunder and looting were commonplace. This brutality spread to the Caribbean, where the inhabitants of towns captured by buccaneers were often tortured and always plundered. The advantage of employing hardened European ex-soldiers was that they provided training in the latest military tactics, and buccaneer forces made full use of their skills.

Exquemelin describes Henry Morgan’s buccaneers advancing ‘with drums beating and colours flying’, resembling a body of regular troops rather than a band of pirates. These men were trained to fight in ranks in a military fashion, and although they lacked harsh military discipline, they were united in a common goal: the capture and plundering of enemy towns. In a period when the Spanish were hard pressed to provide the garrisons and militia in the New World with sufficient

![The two musketeers in this detail from a 1670s engraving show how both Spanish soldiers and buccaneers wore their bandolier of powder apostles and sword and baldric. One soldier is shown wearing a blanket roll (from Les Travaux de Mars, 1672). (National Army Museum, London)](image)
quantities of weapons and powder, the buccaneers had ready access to weapons, and observers recount that they often carried more than one weapon. In 1683, for an attack on Vera Cruz, the Chevalier de Grammont ordered his French buccaneers to bring along as many firearms as they could, and they went into the attack with three or more muskets, pistols or blunderbusses each. This basic firepower was combined with training in the latest volley fire by ranks or even by ‘platoons’. The result was a unit which could produce such a volume of fire that Spanish opponents would simply be shot to pieces. Pistols would be fired at close range, then the buccaneers would draw their swords and knives, or even throw grenades. Until the very end of the buccaneer era, no Spanish army had the ability to resist such powerful forces.

During the 1660s and 1670s, the Spanish militia lacked the training they needed to oppose the buccaneers. A string of humiliating Spanish defeats forced the Spanish crown to re-examine its military abilities. After the sack of Panama, Spanish garrisons in the New World were augmented by an increasing number of regular Spanish troops, men who were as well-trained as the buccaneers. Similarly, increasing quantities of modern military stores and equipment were being shipped to the Spanish colonies, together with instructors to train the colonial militia. By the 1690s the Spanish had become a far more powerful force in the region than they had been even 20 years before. Although Cartagena fell to a large French army in 1697, the Spanish troops in the city fought well, and almost repulsed the attack. Furthermore, Spanish campaigns in Saint Domingue demonstrated that given the right conditions – superiority in numbers and competent commanders – the Spanish army could defeat the buccaneers.

BELOW, LEFT A musketeer armed with a matchlock musket obeying the order, ‘Hold up your musket and present’. By the later 17th century the musket rest was no longer used as the muskets became lighter (from Jacob de Gheyn, The Exercise of Armes, Amsterdam, 1607). (The Royal Armouries, Leeds)

BELOW, RIGHT A matchlock musketeer following the order, ‘Replace your scouring stick’; returning his ramrod to its slot in the base of the musket after loading (from The Exercise of Armes, 1607). The proficiency of buccaneer musketeers in loading and firing at speed gave them a distinct advantage over the slower and less well-trained Spanish militiamen. (The Royal Armouries, Leeds)
A depiction of a skirmish in the New World entitled Point de Sable, suggesting the buccaneer battle of 1666. In its original publication the scene was used to show an engagement between English buccaneers and Spanish infantry on the Pacific coast of Mexico in the 1680s. (The Hensley Collection, Ashville, North Carolina)

Most buccaneer attacks followed a similar pattern. A leader such as Henry Morgan or the Chevalier de Grammont would gather a force together and agree terms over the division of any spoils. An advance party would reconnoitre the target to solicit intelligence. Often the buccaneer band would anchor their ships well away from the target and either march overland or approach it in canoes (piraguas). A favourite time of attack was at dawn, and Sundays or holy festivals also helped to ensure the town would be unprepared to defend itself. The attack would use the element of surprise to achieve its two main objectives. The first was to prevent the civilian population from escaping. Once rounded up they were often held prisoner in a suitably large building, usually a church. The second objective was to overrun the garrison, assaulting any forts if necessary, but by preference, capturing them by stealth and subterfuge. Once they held the town the buccaneers would sack it, and if necessary they would torture their captives to make them reveal where they hid their valuables. Often ransom demands would be sent to the regional governor, when the buccaneers would threaten to destroy the city if payment was not forthcoming. After several days the buccaneers would sail away, taking whatever slaves they captured to sell in the markets of Jamaica or the West Indies. At some agreed rendezvous they would then anchor their ships and divide the plunder, allowing the various buccaneer crews to go their own separate ways. This basic scenario had several variations, including using a city as a base for further attacks into the hinterland, or even using it as a base for a large expedition to another city.

The effect on the towns and cities of the Spanish Main was catastrophic. One Spanish resident of Cartagena noted that most of the towns in what is now Venezuela and Colombia had been sacked at least twice and burned once, while others such as Maracaibo and Santa Marta
Henry Morgan's buccaneers storming one of the fortifications guarding Porto Bello in 1668. This highly inaccurate rendition does show the use of siege ladders and grenades in the assault, both features of the attack. (The Hensley Collection, Ashville, North Carolina)
were sacked or burned regularly. Some settlements such as Riohacha had simply been abandoned, as their inhabitants left for the relative safety of well-defended cities such as Cartagena or Havana.

**Battles**

Although only the battle of Panama has received acknowledgement as a full-scale battle involving a buccaneer army, several other engagements were also worthy of the title. The basic nature of buccaneer tactics was to conduct hit-and-run raids, and not to engage in a stand-up battle unless it could be avoided. In some cases the buccaneers had to fight in order to gain control of the city they were attacking. At Santiago de Cuba in October 1662, Christopher Myngs was forced to fight a Spanish force drawn up in line of battle in front of the city. During Henry Morgan’s Panama campaign, he had to defeat a Spanish blocking force at Venta de Cruces in December 1670 before he could reach Panama.

Offensive action by the Spanish was a second cause of battle. A Spanish invasion of Jamaica in 1658 by 550 troops and artillery from Vera Cruz was defeated when Christopher Myngs met them with 500 buccaneers and ex-soldiers from Port Royal (then called Cagway). The Spaniards were decimated by volley fire then surrendered en masse, and the captured guns were dragged back to Cagway. Henry Morgan easily ambushed and defeated a Spanish force marching to the relief of Porto Bello in 1668. During the Chevalier de Grammont’s campaign against Campeche, a Spanish relief force was defeated as it approached the city from the north in August 1685, while a week later a buccaneer column was in turn beaten by the Spanish at Hampolol in the Yucatan Peninsula. This last action marked a change in the status quo, where better-trained and led Spanish forces were able to defeat buccaneers in open battle. This Spanish victory was repeated in 1691 during a Spanish invasion of the French-held island of Saint Domingue (formerly Hispaniola). The French tried to block the Spanish advance along the north coast of

The battle of Panama 1671, a scene which includes many of the features of the conflict, in no particular order. Of note are the stampeding cattle in the centre, and a buccaneer musket body repulsing Spanish cavalry in the right corner. (From Exquemelin, 1684). (The Hensley Collection, Asheville, North Carolina)
the island at Sabane de Limonade. The resulting battle, fought on 21 January 1691, saw the blocking force of heavily outnumbered buccaneers defeated and the survivors put to the sword. In the summer of 1694 Jamaica was invaded by French buccaneers led by Jean-Baptiste Ducasse. The local English garrison at the landing site was no match for the buccaneers, so a British-backed force of buccaneers were formed in Port Royal. Before they could march on their French counterparts, Ducasse withdrew back to Saint Domingue. Most of these actions involved forces of 500 to 1,500 men per side, and in the European scheme of things would hardly rate as a skirmish. In the Americas, 1,500 men constituted an army.

The battle of Panama (28 January 1671) is a perfect example of the buccaneering art of war in action. Henry Morgan commanded a buccaneer army of around 1,200 men, a force imbued with a confidence of victory that stemmed partly from Morgan’s charisma and the rest from belief in their own abilities. During the brief campaign Morgan used surprise, mobility and superiority in morale to cross the isthmus without any serious opposition from Spanish militia. At Guayabal and again at Venta de Cruces, blocking forces melted away when probed by the buccaneer vanguard. This gave the buccaneers an advantage in morale by the time they reached the city of Panama, where the Spanish formed a line of battle at Mata Asnillos, a mile in front of the city. The 1,200 militia infantry were drawn up in six ranks, while their flanks were protected by militia cavalry, 200 horsemen on each side. Although it was not mentioned if artillery pieces were present, they would have been deployed in front of the infantry.

Morgan began his final advance ‘red and green banners clearly visible to the Spaniards’, and he deployed into a three deep line, his force split into three divisions. The left flank was commanded by the Dutch buccaneer Laurens Prins, who advanced in a wide sweep around the Spanish right flank and occupied a hill overlooking the Spanish line. This stung the Spaniards into committing to an attack, but it also disrupted their secret weapon. The Spanish commander Juan Pérez de
Guzmán had collected a herd of cattle and kept them behind his infantry line. His intention was to let them pass through his lines and stampede them into the buccaneers, disrupting them just before the Spanish foot advanced into contact. The advance by Prins scared the
cattle drovers who fled, leaving the cattle to wander through the Spanish lines. A simultaneous advance on Morgan’s men and on the hill held by Prins ended in disaster. Concentrated volley fire from the buccaneers felled the Spanish, who lost over 100 militiamen in the first volley alone. Stampeding cattle and a withering fire were enough to break the Spaniards, who fled the field, leaving between 400 and 500 dead and wounded on the field. As Pérez de Guzmán stated, ‘hardly did our men see some fall dead and others wounded but they turned their backs and fled’. This was not completely fair, as even veteran infantry, particularly those who suffered 40 per cent casualties in a few minutes, would be inclined to break. As in numerous other actions, superior buccaneer firepower and tactical initiative proved more than a match for the Spanish militiamen who opposed them.

More common than battle was the assault of a Spanish-held fort (castellano). Morgan’s tactic of using a human shield at Porto Bello was unusual, and usually surprise was the best ally of the buccaneers. If the defenders were forewarned then the capture of a fort was extremely difficult as the buccaneers lacked siege equipment. When Morgan’s Lieutenant Joseph Bradley led an assault on Castellano San Lorenzo guarding Panama’s Chagres River in January 1671, the Spanish knew he was coming. The garrison had been reinforced and repulsed four buccaneer assaults despite a constant barrage from snipers and buccaneer warships. A fifth assault found a weak spot and entered the fort, where the remaining defenders were overwhelmed and massacred. This was an exception to the norm, where a quick surprise assault would normally suffice to capture the crumbling and undermanned Spanish defences guarding the ports of the Spanish Main.

**Fighting at Sea**

The first buccaneers took to the sea as a sideline, augmenting the money they made as hunters on Hispaniola by attacking passing Spanish shipping. The tactics used were noted by Exquemelin and others, the earliest being in reference to the French buccaneer Pierre le Grand. These early buccaneers used small pinnaces or even canoes (pinguas) exploiting their small size to avoid detection. If spotted, it was hoped the Spaniards would think the buccaneer craft was a harmless fishing boat. Once within range, marksmen would fire at the helmsman or anyone seen above deck, preventing the Spaniards from handling their ship or raising more sails to get away. If more than one craft was involved, one would sail to the stern of the Spanish ship and immobilise its rudder. They then swarmed aboard.

By the 1650s, buccaneers were seamen rather than hunters with canoes, and their method of attack altered. Larger ships, such as sloops and brigantines, were available in Port Royal, most vessels being captured Spanish ships. The buccaneers who cruised in these were able to venture
throughout the Caribbean basin, and Spanish coastal shipping provided their main target. Typically, the buccaneers would overhaul a Spanish vessel then fire on it using small arms rather than artillery to prevent damage to the hull or sails. Their tactics were identical to those used by the pirates of the early-18th century (for more details see Elite 67 Pirates 1660-1730). If a quarry refused to surrender, a volley of small arms fire preceded a boarding action. As the buccaneers usually outnumbered their opponents and were better armed, the result was rarely in doubt.

Although the emphasis changed from naval attacks to raids on Spanish settlements during the 1660s, Spanish shipping was still attacked wherever it was encountered. It simply made more sense to capture a port and all the ships at anchor rather than to hunt down individual Spanish ships. It must be noted that the buccaneers were never strong enough to attack the annual treasure fleets which sailed between Spain and the New World, or if they were, the fleet was deliberately delayed until the buccaneer threat dissipated. The few treasure galleons captured by the buccaneers were all taken at anchor.

**BUCCANEER COMMANDERS**

While the scope of this book precludes a detailed account of the activities of the great buccaneering leaders of the period, it is important to outline some of the more important commanders. This sample of the major figures illustrates the range of activities the buccaneers were engaged in, the scope of their raids on the Spanish Main and traces the development of buccaneering from the conquest of Jamaica in 1655 to the sacking of Cartagena in 1697. For those seeking more information, the bibliography lists several excellent sources.

**Christopher Myngs (1620-66)**

In February 1658 the 52-gun Cromwellian warship Marston Moor dropped anchor off Port Royal, and her captain Christopher Myngs became commander of the squadron charged with the defence of Jamaica. He had been there before, having served as deputy to the previous commander for 18 months from January 1656. He already had some experience of raids on Spanish settlements, and he used this to form a new strategy for the defence of Jamaica. For nine years, from 1656 to 1665, Myngs would pioneer the use of buccaneers to thwart an invasion by leading preemptive raids on Spanish ports which could be used to launch an attack on Jamaica.
In 1658 he repulsed a small Spanish invasion with a combination of Commonwealth troops and buccaneers. He then sailed to the northern coast of South America, where for the next two years he attacked Spanish ports from Cumaná to Santa Marta, capturing a substantial haul of booty and sending the Spanish into a panic. These raids demonstrated that buccaneers were vital to his strategy of an aggressive defence, and the role of the buccaneer in the defence of Jamaica was established. Myngs led these raids in his frigate _Marston Moor_ accompanied by two or three smaller buccaneer vessels and ostensibly he operated under the authority of the Commonwealth government. His biggest haul came in mid 1659, when he captured Coro, a small port in modern Venezuela. A large cargo of Spanish silver was captured in the harbour, the plunder valued at over a quarter of a million English pounds. Contrary to orders, Myngs split the haul with his buccaneers and crew before the treasure was brought back to Jamaica. The governor of Jamaica accused Myngs of embezzlement, describing him as 'unhinged and out of tune'. Myngs was ordered home in the _Marston Moor_ to stand trial. Fortunately for him, the restoration of the monarchy paralysed the government and the case was dropped. Myngs gained the support of Charles II and he returned to Jamaica in command of the 40-gun royal warship _Centurion_ in August 1662.

Although England and Spain were not at war, the new governor, Lord Windsor encouraged attacks on the Spanish as part of a secret national policy. He paid off the remnants of the Commonwealth army in Jamaica, creating a pool of skilled ex-soldiers just when Myngs needed them most. Within two months Myngs led a buccaneer attack on Santiago de Cuba, defeating the garrison in a brief pitched battle. After destroying the city's formidable fortifications he returned to Port Royal accompanied by a string of prize ships filled with plunder. This was the first instance of a full-scale buccaneer raid, and set the scene for scores of similar amphibious operations over the next 30 years.

During the winter Myngs announced he would lead another expedition, and hundreds of men flocked to Port Royal, including Dutch and French buccaneers. In February 1663 Myngs set sail for the Mexican coast with 12 ships and 1,400 buccaneers. The buccaneers attacked Capmeche, but Myngs was seriously wounded during the assault. After plun-
dering the town the buccaneers withdrew to Port Royal with a fleet of prize ships, and Myngs returned to England to convalesce. A change of policy by the new governor Sir Thomas Modyford meant that further raids were forbidden. In 1665 Myngs was promoted to vice-admiral, and was knighted following the 'Four Days Battle' against the Dutch in June 1666. Two months later he was dead, killed by a cannon ball during another engagement with the Dutch.

**Henry Morgan (c.1635-88)**

Although his early life is obscure, Morgan, a Welshman, arrived in Jamaica in the wake of the Cromwellian invasion in 1655. From 1658 until 1672 he was one of the most formidable buccaneers in the Caribbean. He accompanied Myngs on some of his expeditions, and in 1662 was named as the commander of a privateering vessel. In 1664 he sailed with a group of other buccaneer captains harassing Spanish shipping and towns along the coast of the Yucatan Peninsula and even marched inland to sack the regional capital of Villahermosa. The same surprise attack overland was repeated the following year when Morgan and others crossed Central America to attack the town of Grenada (near the modern Nicaraguan capital of Managua). Morgan made enough money to buy a plantation when he returned to Jamaica, and married his cousin. He also became friends with the governor, Sir Thomas Modyford.

In January 1668 Modyford ordered Morgan to attack the Spanish in Cuba, so armed with a privateering 'letter of marque' he gathered ten ships and 500 men, half of them French. Havana was too well defended, so the expedition landed in western Cuba and marched inland to attack Puerto Principe. The Spaniards were forewarned, and after defeating the local militia and capturing the town, Morgan's men had little plunder to show for their efforts. The French contingent sailed home in disgust, but Morgan proposed to continue his raid, this time in the isthmus of Panama.
Morgan had intelligence that the defences of the treasure port of Porto Bello were not as formidable as they appeared, so he led his men in an attack on the city in July 1668. Anchoring some distance away, he advanced by canoe then on foot until he reached the southern side of Porto Bello. He seized one of the three forts and the town itself in a lightning assault, then used a human shield of prisoners to cover his men when he attacked the second fort. The garrison was butchered, and by the time he advanced on the third fort the following morning, the Spanish had enough and surrendered. The buccaneers looted the town and held it for ransom for a month. After his relief force was defeated by Morgan’s men, the governor of Panama paid the asking price and the buccaneers returned to Port Royal laden with plunder.

In October a second joint expedition with the Tortuga buccaneers got off to a bad start when HMS *Oxford*, the warship lent by Governor Modyford, blew up at its moorings. Cartagena was abandoned as a target and instead Morgan entered Lake Maracaibo in Venezuela. The buccaneers held the region throughout the winter, looting far inland and defeating a Spanish naval squadron sent to capture them. Morgan spent a year adding to his growing estates, but in late 1670 he proposed an attack on Panama, undertaken with the approval of the governor.

In December 1670 he sailed for the isthmus of Panama with a large fleet and 1,200 men. An advance force captured the fortress of San Lorenzo guarding the Chagres River, allowing the buccaneers to cross most of the isthmus by canoe. In early January they defeated a Spanish army drawn up to defend Panama and they captured the city. Forewarned, many Spaniards had fled with their valuables, but the buccaneers tortured those remaining to make them reveal where they had hidden their possessions. By February the buccaneers gave up, destroyed the city and returned to their ships with a poor haul of plunder. This was Morgan’s last great raid, as a change of policy prevented further attacks on the Spanish.

Spain and England had been at peace when Morgan attacked Panama, and within a year the governor was recalled to London to answer charges levelled by the Spanish ambassador. The new governor had Morgan arrested in April 1672 and sent to England, but the buccaneer had powerful friends. He was never imprisoned, and instead managed to have the new governor removed from office. Morgan himself was knighted and appointed as the new deputy governor.

Morgan served as a colonial official for eight years from 1674-82, during which time he strengthened the defences of the

An attack on a Spanish watering party by buccaneers on Guadeloupe. The more remote Spanish islands of the Antilles were contested first by French and English settlers, before being fought for again between the non-Spanish nationalities in the region.
CHRISTOPHER MYNGS' ASSAULT ON SANTIAGO DE CUBA, 1662.
island but never returned to buccaneering. A wealthy landowner, he spent his last years plagued by disease brought on by excessive drinking, but remained an influential figure, and was accorded full military honours when he died. More than anyone else, Morgan has been regarded as the archetypal buccaneer, the terror of the Spanish Main and the defender of Jamaica. It is also hardly surprising that he has a rum named after him.

**Jean David Nau, ‘L’Olonnais’ (c.1635-68)**

‘The man from Olonne’, the Frenchman Jean Nau, arrived in the Caribbean in the 1650s as an indentured servant, but by 1660 he had joined the buccaneers in Saint Domingue (now Haiti), the French-run western portion of Hispaniola. His buccaneering career lasted seven years, beginning in 1662 when he participated in several attacks on Spanish shipping and was given a prize vessel by the French buccaneer governor of Tortuga. He cruised off Cuba and the Yucatan Peninsula, and at some stage he was shipwrecked off Campeche. The buccaneers

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*L’Olonnais torturing Spanish prisoners during his march through the jungles of Honduras in 1667. One is shown having his tongue pulled out, one of the French buccaneer’s less horrific forms of cruelty. On one occasion he reputedly cut out and ate the heart of a victim.*

(Mel Fisher Maritime Museum, Key West, Florida)
were massacred by the local militia as they came ashore, but L’Olonnais escaped by feigning death. In an attack on a town in Cuba he held the town to ransom, then captured and killed the crew of a ship sent to its relief. One man was spared to tell the governor of Havana that L’Olonnais was responsible. By 1667, England and Holland were at war, and the French buccaneers sought to exploit the conflict as France had allied itself with the Dutch. During the spring of 1667, L’Olonnais planned an expedition to cruise the Caribbean looking for a suitable English target to attack.

Nau’s growing reputation ensured that men signed on for his next expedition, and he sailed from Tortuga with over 600 men in eight ships. While cruising in the Antilles, news reached him that France was now at war with Spain, giving him an even better opportunity to profit from Europe’s conflicts. In July the buccaneers set sail for Lake Maracaibo in modern Venezuela. The large lagoon was defended by a small fortification with 16 guns which Nau and his men stormed from the landward side and captured. The lagoon was now at the mercy of the buccaneers.

The first town they attacked was Maracaibo, a prosperous settlement which had been abandoned as the buccaneers approached. For the next two weeks L’Olonnais and his men searched the woods for the inhabitants, then brought them back and tortured them until they revealed where they hid their treasure. The buccaneers then crossed the lake and landed near Gibraltar, on its eastern shore. The garrison outnumbered the buccaneers but L’Olonnais defeated them in a brutal engagement which left 70 buccaneers killed or wounded. They plundered the town and its environs for a month, extorting a ransom which was paid to prevent them burning the town. A return visit to Maracaibo boosted profits and produced another ransom, then the buccaneers returned to Saint Domingue and Tortuga.

In late 1667 L’Olonnais organised another expedition and 700 buccaneers joined him. His six ships cruised off Cuba before sailing for Honduras. The flotilla was becalmed in the Gulf of Honduras, and spent weeks foraging along the coast before reaching the small port of Puerto Cabellos. L’Olonnais captured the town without much problem, but when he marched inland to attack the inland settlement of San Pedro his men were ambushed. He tortured Spanish prisoners until they revealed a back route to the town, free of further ambushes. The buccaneers reached the town and captured it, but there was little plunder to be had. Within months of their return to Puerto Cabellos, L’Olonnais was reduced to one ship, as his colleagues gave up and sailed home. In the spring of 1668 Nau sailed to Nicaragua’s Mosquito Coast where his ship ran aground. While some of his crew built boats, L’Olonnais probed south, only to run into a Spanish patrol. The buccaneers were defeated, and the dwindling band sailed south to the Gulf of Darien. While attempting to find food in an Indian village they were attacked and slaughtered. According to Exquemelin, L’Olonnais was eaten by cannibals.

Michel de Grammont ‘Le Chevalier’ (c.1650–86)
Grammont arrived in the Caribbean during the mid 1670s, a Parisian serving in the French navy. Presumably he was paid off, as by 1675 he was
a buccaneer captain with his own vessel, yet he clearly remained on the right side of the authorities as he was given letters of marque.

This situation changed when he illegally captured a Dutch vessel and chose to remain in Saint Domingue to avoid the repercussions. War between France and Holland relieved any legal threat to Grammont, who participated in an expedition against the Dutch island of Curacao in 1678. The joint buccaneer and French naval force was commanded by the Comte d’Estrees who ran most of his fleet aground on the Islas de Aves as he approached Curacao from the east. The fleet withdrew to Saint Domingue, but the buccaneer contingent elected to stay and raid the Spanish coast of Venezuela, after looting what they could from the French wrecks. The charismatic Grammont was duly elected their leader, and he decided to repeat L’Olonnais’s achievement and enter the Lake of Maracaibo.

In June 1678 he captured the San Carlos bar fortification guarding the entrance to the lake by landing guns from his ships and forming a siege battery. The Spaniards were battered into submission, and Grammont’s six ships, 13 pinnaces and 700 men were loose inside the lagoon. His main ships remained at the mouth of the lagoon to guard the entrance, while he led the rest to Maracaibo. The long-suffering town was looted, followed by Gibraltar on the south-east side of the lagoon, the same towns which had suffered from the attentions of L’Olonnais. He then marched inland and in September he captured the town of Trujillo, even though it was defended by 350 militia and a gun battery. His victory was assured when he circled the town undetected and stormed it from behind. He also used captured Spanish horses to mount
his men, creating fast-moving raiding parties. The French buccaneers returned to Petit Goâve in December, laden with booty.

In May 1680 he led a second expedition to Venezuela, capturing La Guaira, the harbour port of Caracas with 600 men. Although Grammont's men held the town and its two forts, the prompt arrival of 2,000 Spanish reinforcements from Caracas penned them inside the port. Several Spanish assaults were repulsed, and Grammont was seriously wounded in the fighting. The buccaneers evacuated the port, taking several prominent hostages with them for ransom, and returned to Petit Goâve almost empty-handed.

By May 1683 Grammont was ready to go buccaneering again, and allied his men with the Dutch-born French buccaneer leader Laurens de Graff for an attack on Vera Cruz. The assembly of over 1,300 buccaneers was probably the largest since the days of Henry Morgan. The buccaneers reconnoitred the city, and decided a land attack was the most promising, as the landward defences had been neglected. A dawn assault through the streets overwhelmed the garrison of 300 regulars and 400 militiamen, and the city was captured. The buccaneers sailed away after a week of looting and torture, taking hundreds of prisoners with them to ransom. As they left they ran into the annual treasure fleet, but avoided combat and returned to Saint Domingue to divide the spoils. In the summer of 1685 Grammont and de Graff joined forces again to attack Campeche, in Mexico. They held the city for three months despite Spanish relief attempts, and as a ransom was not paid, they burned it when they left in September 1685.

In the following year Grammont raised a new band and cruised off the Yucatan Peninsula looking for a suitable target. He was planning a raid on Spanish Florida when a hurricane scattered his squadron in

Fighting inside a Spanish colonial city. In several buccaneer assaults such as that on Vera Cruz in 1683, the buccaneers managed to enter the town before the local militia had organised any form of serious defence. (Mel Fisher Maritime Museum, Key West, Florida)
Buccaneers threatening to shoot a Spanish captive unless he reveals where he has hidden his valuables. Spanish colonists became adept at rapidly hiding their possessions and fleeing when a buccaneer force approached. (The Hensley Collection, Ashville, North Carolina)

August 1686. When the tempest passed, Grammont’s flagship was nowhere to be seen, and he was presumed lost at sea.

Laurens Cornelis Boudevijn de Graaf (c. 1651-1702)
As a teenager, De Graaf spent three years serving as a sailor in the Spanish navy before deserting in the West Indies. By the mid 1670s he had reached Hispaniola, where he joined the buccaneers and pirates who operated in Samana Bay in the north-east of the island, beginning a career which lasted 19 years, from 1676-95. Although technically under Spanish control during the late-17th century, the region was a lawless area beyond the reach of the colonial authorities. Jacques Pounçay, the governor of Saint Domingue, recorded De Graaf’s rise to power, saying he captured a small bark, then a ship, then a bigger one and so on until he commanded the 28-gun privateering vessel Tigre, a ship he captured from the Spanish navy in late 1679. By this time De Graaf was the acknowledged leader of the Samana Bay buccaneers, who raided shipping throughout the waters of Hispaniola and the Leeward Islands. In July 1682 he captured the Francesca in the Mona Passage off Puerto Rico, a 30-gun warship which was carrying the annual pay for the Havana garrison. This achievement brought De Graaf instant notoriety, and he was asked to join an expedition raised by another Dutch buccaneer, Nikolaas van Hoorn. Together with the French buccaneer Grammont, De Graaf and Van Hoorn attacked the Mexican port of Vera Cruz in May 1683 in one of the largest attacks on the Spanish Main in a decade. The two Dutchmen fell out over the treatment of captives and De Graaf wounded his countryman in a duel. Van Hoorn died of his wounds, leaving De Graaf and Grammont as undisputed buccaneer leaders. In December 1683 he was cruising off Cartagena when he was attacked by three Spanish warships. De Graaf and his men captured them and sent a note to the city governor, thanking them for their Christmas presents! He renamed the captured 40-gun San Francisco, the Fortune (and later Neptune), making it his latest flagship.
In January 1684 he learned of a new war between France and Spain. He immediately sailed to Petit Goâve and was awarded with a French letter of marque. De Graaf remained in the port until winter, then joined a buccaneer force gathering off the Colombian coast. The buccaneers could not agree whom to attack, so in April 1685 De Graaf called his own rendezvous on the Cuban Isla de Pinos. Together with Grammont, De Graaf proposed an attack on Campeche. Unlike the attack on Vera Cruz two years before, the Spaniards had advance warning of the assault, and although the city was captured on 6 July and held for three months, the inhabitants had time to remove most of their valuables. In the bitter struggle for the city De Graaf landed guns from his ships to lay siege to strongholds in the city, including the cathedral and the main city fortress. As the governor of Yucatan refused to pay a ransom to the buccaneers, they destroyed the town when they left. On the return voyage to Saint Domingue the buccaneer fleet became separated and De Graaf’s ship was caught by a Spanish naval squadron. De Graaf in the *Neptune* spent a day exchanging broadsides with two large Spanish ships before escaping under cover of dark. He repaired his ship on a remote spot on the southern coast of Cuba, and returned to Saint Domingue.

The next year he led 500 men in an attack on the Yucatan Peninsula, capturing Tihosuco and threatening the regional capital of Valladolid before withdrawing. This was his last major raid, as the French crown put pressure on the buccaneers to stop their indiscriminate attacks on Spanish settlements. Although De Graaf participated in Ducasse’s attack on Jamaica in 1694, he spent most of the next decade serving the French governor of Saint Domingue as a military commander. He was present at the disastrous battle of Sabane de la Limonde in 1691, and in 1694 and 1695 he fought against English buccaneer attacks and a full-scale Anglo-
Spanish invasion. After the invasion he retired, although he took part in the expedition which settled Louisiana in 1699.

THE WORLD OF THE BUCCANEERS

Buccaneer Ports
Although buccaneers used several remote islands or bays as temporary bases or rendezvous, only two places could be considered safe home ports. The second half of the 17th century was still a period when the Spanish dominated the Caribbean basin, and other European nations had only begun to establish footholds in the Spanish Main. The English used the islands of Barbados and Jamaica, although both were struggling colonies under threat of attack from the Spanish. The French position was more precarious. French buccaneers in the west of Hispaniola established their base on the offshore island of Tortuga, then in the 1650s they founded several small settlements along the western coast of Hispaniola itself. The French government declared that the settlements formed part of Saint Domingue, and sent a royal governor, but the Spanish were less enthusiastic. As the French colony shared the same island with the Spanish, they were constantly threatened by Spanish attack. Similarly, although the Spanish ostensibly controlled the chain of islands which made up the Lesser Antilles, in practical terms most of these had been abandoned and were settled by French, English and Dutch colonists. Constant warfare between all four European powers in the Caribbean meant that these vulnerable outposts changed ownership regularly.

The first of the great buccaneering bases was established during the 1630s on the island of Tortuga, located off the north-western corner of Hispaniola (now modern Haiti and the Dominican Republic). ‘Ile de La Tortue’ or Turtle Island was less than 12 miles long and six wide at its broadest point, and took its name from its shape, which resembled the back of a giant turtle. The name gradually evolved to become ‘Tortuga’.

The island’s first European settlers were cattle hunters (boucaniers) who used the island as a safe haven from the Spanish, and by the 1620s a settlement called Cayenne had been established on the island’s southern side. It included a market place where beef and hides were traded for supplies from passing ships. Smugglers also started using the island as a haven, and by 1630 the buccaneers based there began to attack passing Spanish ships. The island elected an English governor but most of the settlers were wiped out by a Spanish attack in 1634. The Dutch took over the island as a privateering base and lived alongside the mainly French boucaniers, many of whom turned to piracy instead of hunting. A second Spanish attack devastated the poorly-defended island in 1638. The French contingent applied to the governor of Saint
Christopher for help, and in 1642 he sent a new governor, Jean le Vasseur. A skilled engineer, Vasseur built a stone fortress overlooking the harbour with over 40 guns, and he encouraged the buccaneers to use the island as a base by providing them with letters of marque. Exasperated by this thorn in their side, the Spanish launched a third expedition against the island in February 1654. Equipped with a siege battery, 700 Spanish troops captured the fort and its buccaneer garrison, who were sent to France under parole. Hoping that the Spanish had abandoned the island, three buccaneer ships returned in August, but found that the Spaniards had already installed a garrison. The Spanish troops were withdrawn a year later when an English invasion of Hispaniola threatened the capital of Santo Domingo. The buccaneers reoccupied Tortuga in 1655 and continued to use it as a base until 1665, when it became part of the new French colony of Saint Domingue. Bertrand d’Ogeron was appointed the island’s French governor, and like his predecessors he encouraged buccaneering as a form of defence for the island. Buccaneers such as Jean ‘L’Olonnais’ Nau used the island as a base during the 1660s, but by 1670 its popularity was on the wane, replaced by the Saint Domingue colony of Petit Goâve, although some buccaneers continued to use it as a base for another decade.

When the English Commonwealth expedition to capture Hispaniola failed, its commanders looked around for a less-well-defended alternative. In May 1655 they landed at Cagway on Jamaica, a bay close to the Spanish capital of Santiago de la Vega. The Spanish defenders were brushed aside, and the capital capitulated the same day. The rest of the island fell within a few weeks, giving England a useful base in the heart of the Spanish Main. Cagway was on the south side of the island and formed a large and deep natural harbour protected from the sea by a
spit of land. The English quickly established a fortification on Cagway spit, and by 1660 the settlement which grew around it was given the name ‘Port Royal’. Governor d’Oyley feared a Spanish counter-invasion, so in 1658 he adopted a policy which encouraged English buccaneers to base themselves in Jamaica by offering them a safe haven and letters of marque. Cagway (or Port Royal) was well located for raids on the Spanish Main, and it soon grew into a bustling port, providing a market for stolen cargoes and plundered valuables. By the mid 1660s, dozens of buccaneer ships were based in Port Royal, their crews augmented by discharged veteran soldiers. Even after an uneasy peace was declared between England and Spain, Lord Windsor, the governor of Jamaica installed after the 1660 Restoration, continued to promote Port Royal as a buccaneer base and encouraged attacks on the Spanish as an aggressive form of defence for the colony. Christopher Myngs used Port Royal as a base for his attack on Santiago de Cuba in 1662, and although Lord Windsor’s replacement Sir Thomas Modyford publicly denounced attacks on the Spanish, he privately encouraged them. During his tenure as governor Port Royal thrived, playing host to buccaneers such as Henry Morgan, John Morris and David Martien.

Buccaneering in Jamaica reached a peak in the 1660s, when profits from Morgan’s raids made Port Royal a boom-town of over 6,000 people, and buccaneering had become the island’s principal source of revenue. Some successful commanders such as Morgan purchased plantations on the profits of raids against the Spanish Main, and investors and merchants thrived on the plunder brought into the town. Port Royal was a lawless place, with one in every five buildings containing ‘brothels, gaming houses, taverns and grog shops’; it was, according to one righteous visitor, the ‘Sodom of the New World’. A clergyman claimed, ‘its population consists of pirates, cut-throats, whores and some of the vilest persons in the whole of the world’. By the 1680s, the boom had passed, and laws prohibiting buccaneering and piracy were introduced and enforced. In 1692 Port Royal was struck by a devastating earthquake, and much of the port collapsed into the sea, a disaster from which it
never recovered. Some saw the calamity as divine justice for 'that wicked and rebellious place, Port Royal'.

The development of the French colony of Saint Domingue provided the French buccaneers with their own reasonably secure base. While the French governor of the colony and most of the military garrison and colonial administrators were based in the small port of Petit Goâve, the administration spent much of its time and energy developing the northern portion of the colony, and the southern settlement was left to its own devices. This suited the buccaneers, and by 1660 they had established their own armed base in the settlement’s sheltered harbour. Sited at the south-eastern corner of the Gulf of Logane, the port was protected by a fort, garrisoned by both buccaneers and local militia and armed with guns captured from Spanish ships or towns. The French governor of Saint Domingue during the late 1670s and early 1680s, Jacques Pouancay, actively encouraged the buccaneers with a stream of privateering commissions and letters of marque in return for help in the defence of the colony. The same policy was also initially adopted by his successor, Pierre-Paul Tarin de Cussy, when he took over control of the colony in 1685. This encouragement ended when the French crown demanded that De Cussy call a halt to the attacks of French buccaneers on Spanish settlements, although the buccaneers still helped him defend the colony. Many buccaneers drifted away, and the settlement staggered on pursuing its legal, although unprofitable, course until a fresh war with Spain allowed the buccaneers to legitimately attack the Spanish once again. Buccaneers assisted De Cussy in resisting a Spanish invasion in 1691, and hundreds of them died with the governor when the Spanish defeated the small French force in battle. The replacement governor, Jean-Baptiste Ducasse, had once served as town governor of Petit Goâve and was a former buccaneer, but even he was unable to prevent the settlement's steady decline as a buccaneering centre. When Ducasse led the Saint Domingue buccaneers in the raid on Cartagena in 1697, it marked the end of a chapter for the port. Peace with Spain brought an end to buccaneering, and the remaining buccaneers either took up legal trading or quit the colony and became pirates. In its heyday during the 1680s Petit Goâve played host to dozens of buccaneering ships and hundreds of buccaneers. By 1700 it had become a sleepy French colonial backwater.
**Buccaneer Plunder**

From the first raids on the Spanish colonies in America during the 16th century, the Spanish Main was regarded as a veritable treasure house by other European powers. Although the flow of silver and gold from the New World to Spain was drying up during the late-17th century, the treasure produced by the mines in Peru and Mexico provided a tempting target for the buccaneers. Silver production at Potosí, the richest silver mine in the world, reached its peak in 1600 when it reached nine million pesos a year. By 1700, this had dropped to a mere two million pesos a year, and the decline was repeated in silver mines throughout Central and South America. The silver which actually reached Spain was less still, as money was absorbed for the defence of the treasure fleet and the ports of the Spanish main, by corruption and increasingly by the rising cost of mining and production.

To the buccaneers, there was still enough silver to go round. By 1660, much of this silver was shipped in coin form, almost exclusively in pesos. Where the denomination of silver was measured in reals, a peso was an eight-real piece, and contained exactly one ounce of silver. These eight-real coins (or pesos) became the ‘pieces-of-eight’ of pirate literature. To give some indication of value, the average seaman’s wage in 1660 was just six pesos a month, while a Spanish naval captain earned 24 pesos. Measured in these terms, the hauls made by the buccaneers during the late-17th century were truly phenomenal, and had a catastrophic inflationary effect on the fragile Spanish economy.

De Graaf’s capture of a single warship carrying military pay in 1682 produced 120,000 pesos, to be shared among his crew of 100 men.
Morgan’s raid on Porto Bello in 1668 netted twice that amount, but the money was shared between just under 500 buccaneers. His raid into Lake Maracaibo the following year produced a similar quantity of silver, and although the sack of Panama produced disappointing results, the haul was probably equally substantial, except that it had to be shared between 1,200 men. As the buccaneers looted personal possessions as well as money, ports such as Port Royal and Petit Goâve became trading centres for luxury goods, and plundered valuables were sold on to traders who shipped them to Europe or even sold them back to the Spanish. By 1680, the English colony of Jamaica was bringing in an income of 750,000 pesos a year through buccaneering raids and her plantations, and Spanish currency was so common on the streets of Port Royal that the authorities acknowledged the peso as legal tender. The last great raid against Cartagena in 1697 brought an end to almost 50 years of plundering on the Spanish Main, but for the Spanish the end came too late. By 1700 a combination of inflation and the devastation wrought by buccaneering raids had plunged the Spanish Empire into an economic decline from which it never recovered.

**Buccaneering Ships**

The earliest buccaneers took to piracy using canoes (piraguas) or small fishing boats and pinnaces, operating close to the shore of Hispaniola. Although the buccaneers used larger vessels from the 1640s, these small craft were still used extensively throughout the period during raids on Spanish ports. They performed a role similar to modern landing craft, transporting the buccaneers from a secluded anchorage where they would hide their larger ships to a landing site close to the port they wanted to attack. Canoes often formed part of the plans of Henry Morgan, who used them during attacks on Tabasco (1665), Granada (1665), Porto Bello (1668) and the advance on Panama (1670-71). During the first of these, Morgan’s men returned from their attack on the provincial capital of Villahermosa to find that the Spanish navy had captured their ships while they were away raiding. After driving off the local militia, Morgan and his men escaped in two small coastal trading pinnaces.

Unlike a piragua which could only hold six to ten men, the pinnacle was a more substantial vessel of between ten and 60 tons. It was fitted with oars, although it also carried a single mast and a jib sheet and mainsail. Pinnacles were used as tenders for larger ships, and buccaneer vessels often towed a pinnacle behind them, allowing them to operate closer inshore than the draught of the larger boat allowed. These were ideal buccaneering craft for raids, as they could carry up to 60 men. Most ships also carried longboats, which were smaller versions of pinnaces,
capable of holding 40 men, and were also oar powered and fitted with a detachable mast if required. A buccaneering ship on its way to conduct a raid would therefore give the appearance of some kind of 17th-century amphibious landing ship, her decks crammed with longboats and canoes, with possibly more longboats and a pinnace being towed behind her. In several raids which were undertaken close to a home port, pinnaces accompanied the main vessels of the expedition under their own sail. For example, Grammont and De Graaf's attack on Vera Cruz (1683) was undertaken with a fleet of five buccaneering ships accompanied by eight lesser craft (presumably pinnaces).

Each buccaneer captain had his own ship, and crews signed on for particular ventures. Similarly, entire ships and crews signed on with buccaneer commanders to undertake a major raid. Men such as Grammont and De Graaf maintained a following, often acting as the leader for buccaneering captains and their crews of a particular nationality or from a particular port. The way these captains acquired their ships is exemplified by De Graaf's method of improving the ships he commanded: 'From a small bark he took a small ship; from this a bigger one, until at last there came into his power one of 24 to 28 guns'. The buccaneer continued the process by capturing even larger Spanish vessels.
warships of 30 and then 40 guns. This process could be taken to extremes. During the last cruise of L'Olonne in 1668, he acquired the prestigious prize of a small Spanish galleon, although it was such a ‘heavy sailor’ that it was difficult to operate in the light winds and treacherous waters found off the Honduran coast, and it ran aground. Like the pirates of the early-18th century, while some sought prestigious flagship vessels, others preferred smaller vessels which combined speed with maneuverability. A buccaneer fleet would therefore contain an assortment of vessels, ranging from small pinnaces to medium-sized warships, although barks and small two-masted vessels would predominate.

The End of the Buccaneers

Several factors contributed to the end of the buccaneering era. The English, French and Dutch had all been at war with the Spanish for much of the 17th century, but for the English this ended in 1670. Local governors such as Sir Thomas Modyford of Jamaica found it impossible to lend their support to buccaneering raids, either officially or otherwise. Henry Morgan’s attack on Panama in 1670-71 marked a transition, as it occurred after the 1670 Treaty of Madrid brought peace with Spain, and both Modyford and Morgan eventually faced charges, levelled in order to placate the Spanish. By the time Morgan returned to Jamaica in 1674, England was at peace with everyone, and the constant stream of letters of marque had dried up. Clearly if English buccaneers wanted to continue their actions, they would have to sign on with foreign commanders. Anti-piracy laws were introduced to Jamaica in 1681, making it virtually impossible to use Port Royal as a base. English buccaneers such as John Coxton and Edmond Cooke raided the Pacific
coast of the Spanish empire, attacking coastal ports in Peru during the 1680s, but they sailed under French colours. After 1670 the buccaneering torch had been passed to the French.

Based in Saint Domingue, French buccaneers continued their raids on the Spanish Main, assisted by France’s belligerent posture towards Spain. Since 1635, the two countries had been at war almost continually, with only four periods of relative peace from 1659-67, 1668-74, 1679-83 and again from 1684-89. Relative peace in Europe meant open hostility in the Caribbean, and the 1670s and 1680s saw a period when French buccaneers conducted some of their largest raids: Maracaibo (1678), Vera Cruz (1683) and Campeche (1685), irrespective of whether the two countries were at war. A succession of French governors in Saint Domingue regarded the buccaneers as the best form of defence for the colony and an excellent source of revenue. The end came with the Peace of Ryswick in 1697. The buccaneers felt betrayed by the French government following their treatment during the attack on Cartagena in 1697, and no more large-scale buccaneer raids were ever attempted. Instead, former buccaneers turned to legal activities or piracy. When the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-14) broke out, many former buccaneers became privateers, but operated independently. The great buccaneering fleets became a thing of the past.

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THE PLATES

A: EARLY BUCANEERS IN HISPANIOLA, c.1630
The early buccaneers were hunters living wild in the western part of Hispaniola (now Haiti). Although the island was controlled by the Spanish who resented all intruders into the Spanish Main, their influence was limited to the island's settlements concentrated to the south and east of Hispaniola. The buccaneers roamed the rest of the island, hunting wild cows and pigs, then selling the meat and skins to settlers and passing ships. Although the Spanish launched numerous punitive expeditions into the interior, they never succeeded in driving the interlopers from the island.

Early buccaneers dressed in home-made hunting clothes, resembling 'the butcher's vilest servants who have been eight days in the slaughterhouse without washing themselves'. Rawhide breeches, pigskin boots and coarse linen shirts were all common attire, although trading profits enabled some to develop more refined tastes in dress. Muskets and powder, along with the other essentials such as tobacco and wine, were purchased from French smugglers, with whom the buccaneers maintained a healthy trade. The Spanish patrols were almost exclusively mounted, and they relied on local Arawak scouts to guide them through the island's interior. Military dress resembled current European fashion, although armour was less predominant in the tropics.

B: THE ENGLISH CAPTURE OF JAMAICA, 1655
Following an unsuccessful attempt to capture Hispaniola, an English military expedition arrived off Jamaica in May 1655. Although the troops formed part of the army of Oliver Cromwell's English Commonwealth, they bore only a passing resemblance to the soldiers who triumphed in the English Civil War. The contingent supplied from the regular army produced the men other regiments wanted rid of, and their numbers were augmented by recruits from the back streets and prisons of London.

The troops landed at Cagway (now Kingston Harbour) and drove off the handful of Spanish troops who opposed their disembarkation, supported by fire from the fleet. The Spanish pulled back to the island's capital, Santiago de la Vega (now Kingston), and then withdrew into the interior. Refugees fled the city ahead of the English, but the evacuation was still underway when the troops arrived. Religious differences fuelled the antagonism felt by the Commonwealth troops for the Spanish inhabitants, and while some plundered what they could, others desecrated the capital's churches.

The English soldiers are depicted wearing the uniform russet coats of Cromwell's army, but their lack of uniformity betrays the lack of discipline in the army of the West Indies. Dress has also been adapted to suit the Jamaican climate.

C: CHRISTOPHER MYNGS' ASSAULT ON SANTIAGO DE CUBA, 1662
Christopher Myngs commanded the naval forces guarding Jamaica, and he adopted a defence based on attacking nearby Spanish ports that were potential bases for an invasion attempt. The principal of these was Santiago de Cuba, and although Spain and England were officially at peace, Myngs led a force of 1,300 buccaneers against the port. The buccaneers landed unopposed several miles east of Santiago and advanced six miles up the San Juan River to reach San Juan Hill at dawn on 17 October. The attackers found the outnumbered Spanish garrison drawn up in front of the city, and Myngs ordered his men to attack. The Spaniards were quickly routed and the city fell to the buccaneers.

Many of the English buccaneers were ex-soldiers discharged from the Commonwealth invasion force in Jamaica, and wore their old uniforms. Others wore whatever they had available or felt comfortable in, including the sailors from the Royal Navy warships which participated in the assault. Myngs is shown wearing a civilian gentleman's coat, as naval uniforms were left to individual tastes at the time.

No uniform regulations existed for the Spaniards, and dress was left to the individual unit commanders. Often there was no uniformity, and Spanish troops wore whatever clothing was available.

D: HENRY MORGAN AT PORTO BELLO, 1668
By 1668, Henry Morgan had become the de facto head of the buccaneers based at Port Royal, leading them on increasingly audacious raids. In July he landed close to Porto Bello with 500 men and stormed the town from the landward side. With the town under his control, his next task was to capture the main fortress of Santiago. In a particularly callous move, he forced prisoners to advance ahead of his storming
A buccaneering vessel at anchor during the 1680s. This was a typical size for a small privateering vessel, capable of carrying between 12 and 18 guns and a crew of around 150 men. (The Hensley Collection, Asheville, North Carolina)

party, acting as a human shield. As most of these were priests and nuns, the garrison were reluctant to open fire, but one gun crew was less squeamish and scythed down several nuns, priests and buccaneers with chain shot. It was too little, too late, and Morgan scaled the walls, captured the fortress and according to one contemporary, massacred the garrison. This plate shows the Spanish gun crew debating whether to open fire. The Media Culebrina (Demi-Culverin) shown in the plate is an 18-pounder artillery piece, one of the largest used in coastal defences. Mounted on a Spanish garrison carriage, it would have been loaded with chain shot or canister, acting like an oversized shotgun. Spanish artillerymen were issued with blue uniforms faced with red in the early 1660s, before a similar uniform dress was applied to the infantry.

**E: 'L'Olonnais' at Maracaibo, 1667**
In Exquemelin’s contemporary account The Buccaneers of America (1678), Jean-David Nau, more commonly known as ‘L'Olonnais’, is portrayed as the most sadistic of all the buccaneers described in the work. This reputation stemmed from the excessive cruelty he showed to Spanish prisoners who fell into his hands.

In the summer of 1667 he sailed from Tortuga with a force of mainly French buccaneers, bound for the coast of Venezuela. After overrunning the Spanish battery guarding the mouth of Lake Maracaibo he had free reign inside the lagoon, and was able to attack two largely undefended Spanish towns, Maracaibo and Gibraltar. Although the inhabitants of Maracaibo fled into the jungle when the buccaneers arrived, several were caught and dragged back to the town. L'Olonnais hacked several prisoners to death then tortured the rest to reveal where they had hidden their possessions. After two weeks the buccaneers sailed away, leaving the town in ashes.

The dress of the buccaneers is based on the standard attire of seamen during the latter half of the 17th century, modified for operations on land only by the addition of footwear and weaponry. Some, including L'Olonnais, improved their appearance by wearing clothes plundered from the Spanish.

**F: Henry Morgan at Panama, 1671**
In December 1670 Henry Morgan undertook his most ambitious expedition. Commanding a force of 1,200 French and English buccaneers, he landed on the isthmus of Panama after an advance party captured Fort Lorenzo which guarded the mouth of the Chagres River. He followed the
river inland to Venta de Cruces where he brushed aside a blocking force, then continued on to Panama on the Pacific coast. Although the city was considered one of the jewels of the Spanish New World, it was poorly defended, as an attack from the Caribbean coast was considered impractical.

On 28 January the buccaneers found Spanish troops drawn up before the city. Morgan sent part of his force to outflank the Spaniards, forcing them into launching a premature charge. The Spanish commander planned to stampede cattle into the buccaneers' ranks, but the drovers ran away when the firing started. The cattle ran amok among the Spaniards, and both became targets for the disciplined volleys of the buccaneers. While the Spanish foot were drawn up in six ranks, Morgan had his men deploy in only three, making full use of their experience with musketry. Morgan had trained his men to fight in a military manner, and their fire decimated the Spanish, who fled the field and abandoned the city.

The plate shows the disciplined nature of the buccaneers' line. Although they lacked the uniformity of a regular army, they were veteran musketeers, and their volley fire was superior to anything their Spanish opponents were capable of. The Spanish city militia were issued with white uniforms, although their appearance was not as regular as that of European troops of the same period.

**G: MORGAN'S BUCCANEERS IN PORT ROYAL, 1668**

In the late-17th century, Port Royal resembled a 'wild west' frontier town, living on the edge of and often beyond the bounds of the law. Although it formed the capital of the

English colony of Jamaica, Port Royal was virtually abandoned to the buccaneers. A contemporary observer described the town as 'the Sodom of the New World', and a visiting clergyman reported that, 'since the majority of its population consists of pirates, cut-throats, whores and some of the vilest persons in the whole of the world, I felt my permanence there was of no use'. The small town was crammed with brothels, gaming houses, taverns and grog shops, while its markets and warehouses became a clearing house for plunder. It was a boom-town, whose profits came from buccaneer raids on the Spanish Main, and following a successful foray, the tavern keepers, prostitutes and thieves would try to help the returning buccaneers lose their share of the plunder as rapidly as possible. The potential for fighting between buccaneer groups or merchants was ever-present, and some of the buccaneers were not to be crossed. Exquemelin describes how Roc Braziliano became drunk, then 'would roam the town like a madman. The first person he came across, he would chop off his arm or leg, without anyone daring to intervene, for he was like a maniac'.

**H: ROC BRAZILIANO IN A SKIRMISH NEAR CAMPECHE, c.1669**

Roc (or Roche) Braziliano was one of the lesser-known buccaneers, who has assumed a place in history thanks to Exquemelin's account. He commanded a buccaneer ship based in Port Royal which ran aground near Campeche, on Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula. He and his crew took whatever they could from the ship and abandoned it, setting out along the coast towards a known buccaneer watering place and
Sir Henry Morgan shown during his later, post-buccaneering days. Although a successful plantation owner and deputy-governor of Jamaica, his health deteriorated from frequent drinking bouts and feasting with his old buccaneer colleagues. He died a sick and corpulent shadow of his former energetic self. (Author's Collection)

PREVIOUS PAGE A stylised depiction of a late-17th-century pinnace and its French buccaneer crew. These vessels were widely used during raids on Spanish cities or as privateering vessels in their own right. (The Hensley Collection, Ashville, North Carolina)

rendezvous opposite the island of Cozumel. The Spanish found the ship and despatched patrols to find the crew. A cavalry patrol sent northwards from Campeche towards Mérida overtook the buccaneers, forcing them to turn and fight. Braziliano formed his 30 men into a hasty firing line and fired a volley, buccaneers ‘killing one horseman with nearly every shot’. The Spaniards continued the skirmish for another hour before retreating back to Campeche.

The Spanish governor of New Spain (Mexico) issued clothing instructions, allowing us to reconstruct the newly distributed uniforms of the Spanish provincial cavalry. The horsemen were issued with a number of new ‘Miguelet-lock’ flintlock carbines; the buccaneers increasingly made use of the new ignition system, although matchlock muskets still predominated. The Spanish cavalry were also in the process of being issued with flintlock pistols during this period, the new firearms replacing the older wheel-lock weapons.

1: THE SACK OF CARTAGENA, 1697

During the War of the League of Augsburg (1688-97), France fought Spain, and as the conflict drew to a close, her leaders looked for a last chance to profit from the war. French strategists planned an assault on the rich Spanish city of Cartagena (in modern Venezuela) but the French naval and military forces available were insufficient for the job. Admiral Pointis, the commander of the expedition, asked the French buccaneers for help, and they agreed, in return for a share of the plunder. The city fell in April following a short siege, but the buccaneers were kept outside the city by the French admiral. The buccaneers were prevented from looting the city, but expected to be appropriately rewarded for their efforts. Instead, Admiral Pointis cheated them of their rightful share of the plunder, and when the French fleet sailed, the buccaneers returned to the now defenceless city. The buccaneers held the city for almost a week, looting whatever they could find and extorting what they could not through torture, execution and rape.

The plate depicts the return of the buccaneers, all heavily armed and intent on revenge. The Spaniards are shown in the contemporary civilian clothes and militia uniforms of the day, and as the inhabitants of a wealthy city, they are wearing the latest in Spanish fashion. As in the other plates, the dress of the buccaneers is more mundane, and they wear the attire of late-17th-century seamen.
Henry Morgan at Porto Bello, by Howard Pyle, from Harper's Weekly, 1887. The work captures the feel of the moment, as after they captured the town the buccaneers spent weeks extracting information from their Spanish captives and drinking the town dry. (The Hensley Collection, Asheville, North Carolina)

**J: BUCCANEER WEAPONRY**

During the buccaneering era there was a gradual change in the types of weaponry used by both the buccaneers and their Spanish opponents. The matchlock musket remained in use until the last years of the 17th century, but from the 1650's on, flintlock weapons were introduced into the Caribbean region. While flintlocks were favoured by the buccaneers, the Spanish government continued to issue matchlock muskets to their New World garrison troops until the late-17th century. The two Spanish muskets illustrated are pictured together with their attendant Spanish issued equipment; a bandolier and a priming flask. Flintlock pistols were used by both sides from the late 1650's. Two Spanish pikes are included in the Plate, representative of the weapons carried by a proportion of Spanish militia troops throughout the century. The plug bayonet illustrated in the lower-right corner made the pike superfluous in most other European armies by 1690, and French buccaneers were known to equip themselves with bayonets from the 1670's on.

The two 'hangers' on the right of the Plate are typical of the swords carried by buccaneers through the period. The other four swords are (from left to right) a Spanish 'rapier', a Spanish 'hanger', a Scottish 'broadsword' and a Spanish 'small-sword', all of which were used during the era. The 'broadsword' was similar to cavalry swords used by the Spanish, and both Scottish and English 'broad swords' or 'heavy cavalry swords' were sold in Port Royal from 1668 onwards. The Spanish reliance on thrusting weapons and the Buccaneer's reliance on cutting weapons is evident from this selection of contemporary edged weapons.
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Before the era of the great pirates in the early 18th-century, there was an even more bloodthirsty phase of attacks in the Caribbean known as the ‘Buccaneering Era’. For over 50 years, English, French and Dutch buccaneers launched a series of devastating assaults on Spanish towns, ports and shipping. Well-known buccaneers such as Henry Morgan carried out their raids under the protection of the English crown, and in 1692, the French even used buccaneers to help its army capture the great Spanish city of Cartagena.

Author: Angus Konstam has written several books for Osprey, mainly on 18th century subjects. His recent works include Campaign 44 Pavia 1525 and Elite 67 Pirates 1660-1730. Angus previously worked as a Curator of Weapons at the Royal Armouries, Tower of London, and Chief Curator of the Mel Fisher Maritime Museum. He now devotes himself to full-time writing.

Illustrator: Angus McBride needs little introduction, having established himself over the years as one of the world's most respected and talented artists in his field. He has illustrated a wide array of Osprey titles, covering subjects as diverse as the German Army of World War 2 and the Ancient Assyrians.

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